Environmental Threat to Western Ghats

5063. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Western Ghats are among the 25 most species-rich and environmentally threatened area of the world, according to a report of the Population Action International; and

(b) if so, what steps Government are taking to protect this area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Several steps have been taken by the Government to protect the species-richness of Western Ghats. A separate Western Ghat Development Programme was launched by the Government of India in the beginning of the Fifth Five year Plan with the objectives of eco-preservation, eco-restoration and eco-development. Protection, conservation and regeneration efforts have been strengthened under the Bio-sphere Reserve programme with the coming into being of the Nilgiri Bio-sphere Reserve spread over the States of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Besides, over 80 National Parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries further contribute to protection and conservation of species-richness and bio-diversity of the area. Assistance is being provided to the State Governments for taking up eco-development around the protected areas. Financial assistance is also being provided to Non-Governmental Organisations and Voluntary Agencies for afforestation and tree plantation. Other measures include survey and inventorisation of the floral and faunal resources, funding of research projects, control of illegal trade in wildlife and its products and awareness generation for conservation.

Funds for plantation programme in Meghalaya

5064. SHRI ONWARD L. NONGTDU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of funds allocated by Government for the plantation programme in Meghalaya during each of the last five years; and

(b) the details of steps being taken by Government with regard to actually utilising the above funds during this period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) Central assistance

provided by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to Meghalaya for taking up plantation activities under its centrally sponsored schemes; *viz.* Integrated Afforestation and Eco-Development Projects Scheme (IAEPS), Area Oriented Fuelwood and Fodder Projects Scheme (AOFFPS) and Conservation and Development of Non-Timber Forest Produce including Medicinal Plant Scheme (NTFP), during the last five years is given in Statement (*See* below). During the Ninth Plan projects under these schemes have been sanctioned for a period of 4-5 years. Funds released in each financial year are dependent on the progress of projects and utilisation of funds in the preceding year. The Ministry of Environemnt and Forests has requested the State Government of Meghalaya from time to time to improve the utilisation of funds provided under the above schemes.

Statement

Central assistance provided by the Ministry of Environment and forests to Meghalaya for taking up plantation activities under its centrally sponsored schemes, *viz.* Integrated Afforestation and Eco-Development Projects Scheme (IAEPS), Area Oriented Fuelwood and Fodder Projects Scheme (AOFFPS) and Conservation and Development and Non-Timber Forest Produce including Medicinal Plants Scheme (NTFP), during the last five years.

Financial Year	Funds allocated (Rs. in lakhs)
1995-96	245.13
1996-97	140.95
1997-98	100.00
1998-99	28.83
1999-2000	67.27
TOTAL:	582.18

Deputationists on Scientific Posts in the Ministry of Environment and Forests

5065. PROF. (SHRIMATI) BHARATI RAY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether scientific post in the Ministry of Environment and Forests are increasingly being filled by persons on deputation from non-scientific services;